

WASHINGTON - U.S. Reps. Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Robert Andrews (D-NJ), Co-Chairs of the U.S. House Iran Working Group, will introduce a resolution today calling on the Islamic Republic of Iran to release the 15 British sailors and marines seized in the Persian Gulf on March 23. The sailors and marines, based on the HMS Cornwall, had just finished a routine search of a civilian vessel in Iraqi waters at the time of the kidnapping. On Sunday, the Government of Iran announced that it is considering charging the sailors and marines for illegally entering Iranian-controlled waters.

“The Government of Iran has once again ignored international law by seizing sailors in waters outside of their jurisdiction,” said Congressman Kirk. “This act is one of a long list of actions whose intent is to destabilize the entire Middle East. As Co-Chairs of the Iran Working Group, Rep. Andrews and I call on Iran to stop its militarization of the commercial shipping lanes of the Persian Gulf.”

The sailors and marines were captured on the same day that the UN debated additional sanctions for Iran’s continued efforts to enrich uranium. The sanctions were unanimously approved on Saturday, and include a ban on arms sales from Iran as well as freezing assets of 28 people and organizations involved with the nation’s nuclear programs.

“A UN-imposed sanction on Iran’s gasoline imports would put the appropriate pressure on the Iranian economy to halt their acts of aggression,” said Congressman Kirk. “A diplomatic solution, orchestrated through the UN, is the best course of action for the stability and safety of the region.”